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ABSTRACT

This monograph presents the plan of the Intra-Agency Council of the New York State Department of Education to increase physical and programmatic accessibility of all Department programs and services. First, the mission and goals of the Council as well as its activities are briefly reviewed. Next, the process for developing the department plan is detailed including specific actions to address such issues as access to Department-sponsored meetings, communication of Department policies regarding purchase of specialized equipment for disabled employees, and a training needs assessment. Responsibilities of the Department, of management, and of staff are then outlined. The major section presents the plan for each Department Office in terms of its responsibilities, identified priorities regarding accessibility, and actions planned for the next year. Plans of the following offices are detailed: Office of the President of the University and Commissioner of Education; Office of the Executive Commissioner; Office of Cultural Education; Office of Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education; Office of Higher and Continuing Education; Office of the Professions; and Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities. Finally, the plan's evaluation process is summarized. A listing of Council members is attached. (DB)

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Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, New York 12234
August, 1991

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PREFACE

In response to the concern that Department programs and services are not as readily accessible to individuals with disabilities as they are to people without disabilities, the State Education Department established an Intra-Agency Council in September, 1989. This Council, with membership representing all areas of the Department, was asked to develop the accompanying *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services*. This Plan represents a starting point for ensuring that all Department programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities and outlines a process by which the Department will monitor the implementation of the Plan. This Plan emerged from a yearlong process of evaluating access to all programs and services offered either directly by the Department or under the purview of the Department.

This Plan outlines the commitment of the State Education Department to ensure equal access to all Department programs, services, and employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities. It reflects the value we, as a State, place on all of our citizens.

If you have any questions regarding the Plan or would like additional information, please contact Lawrence C. Gloeckler, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, New York State Education Department, Room 1606, One Commerce Plaza, Albany, New York 12234, (518) 474-2714.

Thomas Sobol

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INTRODUCTION

The State Education Department has a commitment to ensuring that all citizens, regardless of age, minority status, or disability have access to the full array of services and programs offered by the Department. The Department has already allocated significant resources to services designed specifically for individuals with disabilities. However, there is a concern that individuals with disabilities experience difficulty in physically and programmatically accessing programs and services offered by the Department to the public at large.

In response to this concern, the Intra-Agency Council was established by Commissioner Sobol to develop a plan to increase physical and programmatic access for individuals with disabilities to all Department programs and services. Physical accessibility refers to the overall accessibility for individuals with disabilities to a building and adequate and appropriate safety and emergency contingencies. Programmatic accessibility refers to overall accessibility to programs, thus ensuring that an individual with a disability can use or benefit from the service or program once he or she has gained access to the building.

MISSION AND GOALS OF THE INTRA-AGENCY COUNCIL

The Intra-Agency Council consists of representatives of the Office of the Commissioner of Education, Office of Cultural Education, Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Office of Higher and Continuing Education, Regents College, and Office of the Professions. (A list of Council members is located on page 23.) The Council's chairperson is the Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID).

The mission of the Intra-Agency Council is to coordinate, support and ensure that all services and activities of the State Education Department are and will continue to be physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities. To achieve this mission, the following goals have been identified:

- Increase the level of awareness of Department staff on issues and needs of individuals with disabilities, as those issues and needs relate to the staff's Departmental activities and programs; and
- Facilitate the coordination and implementation of activities to improve access and service delivery to individuals with disabilities.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

During the past year, the Council has focused on the development of a Departmentwide coordinated plan for providing services to individuals with disabilities to ensure that there are no gaps in services offered by the Department and that equal access to services is provided for such individuals. This accessibility applies to internal Department programs and services as well as those programs and services in the field over which the Department has authority or exerts influence.

The Council also recognized the need for systemwide strategic planning and goal setting to guide the Department in addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Although several offices within the Department are responsible for developing plans and activities for such individuals, there needs to be an effective system within the Department for intra-agency communication and the coordination of such activities.

In developing this Departmentwide Plan, the Council undertook a series of major data collection activities within every office of the Department. These activities focused on collecting data about services and programs available to individuals with disabilities and the public at large; identifying impediments to such services and programs for individuals with disabilities; identifying training needs of Department staff on issues related to individuals with disabilities; and identifying Departmentwide activities that will remove impediments and increase access to all programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

As a result of the initial data collection throughout the Department, it is evident that there is a

wide array of services available to individuals with disabilities through the State Education Department in addition to those offered through the offices whose primary responsibilities are services to such individuals. It is also evident that there are numerous programs and services throughout the Department that have been modified to ensure accessibility by individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities and their families often are not aware of these programs and services. It was also determined that there are services and programs available to the public at large that are not readily accessible, physically or programmatically, to individuals with disabilities. In the initial data analysis, 77 impediments to Department services were identified. These impediments, with accompanying comments from Department staff, were grouped into the following five major categories:

- *awareness/attitude:* Individuals with disabilities were unaware of the program or service; staff involved in the program were unaware that individuals with disabilities could participate in such a program; staff had a lack of knowledge related to individuals with disabilities.

  examples: "In some instances, persons in need of special services simply don't know of their availability." "The chief impediment to access...is ignorance of the service."

- *physical:* Individuals with disabilities were not able to participate because programs and services were not physically accessible.

  examples: "Some of these programs operate in facilities that are not accessible to the physically disabled." "There are not braille maps or markers in the building to assist visually impaired visitors in finding their way to the Bureau." "To get to the room where the meeting was being held, I had to go through the loading dock or be lifted on to the stage. As a professional, it was degrading."

- *programmatic:* Programs and services need to be modified or altered to ensure programmatic accessibility by individuals with disabilities.

  examples: "Information products from this program are usually in the format of a 'classical nature,' such as brochures, books and maps, so certain persons with disabilities such as the visually, emotionally, or learning disabled may not be able to use them."

- *regulatory:* Current regulations, requirements, or guidelines did not include or allow for participation of individuals with disabilities.

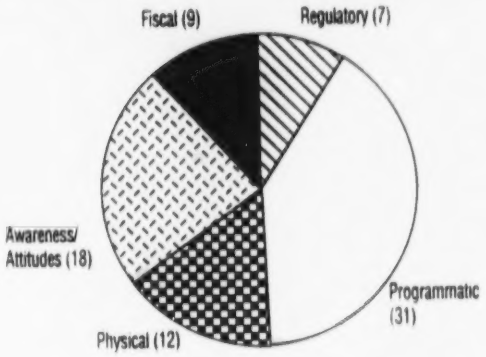
  examples: "There is a lack of a consistent Department policy and procedure related to administering accessibility compliance in school districts and technical assistance functions." "Department regulations do not address the provision of information related to...the availability of instructional and support services to meet the academic and social needs of students with disabilities on the college campus."

- *fiscal:* Activities that would make programs and services physically and/or programmatically accessible required fiscal resources that are not currently available.

  examples: "There is a lack of funds allocated to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities." "We need a staff member with expertise in special education on the monitoring team but funding is not available."

It was determined from an analysis conducted by Council members, that the majority of the impediments identified were not related to fiscal resources or regulations but, rather, could be categorized as programmatic in nature or related to the awareness level or attitudes of individuals with disabilities or Department staff. The following graph depicts the number of impediments identified for each category.

NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED IMPEDIMENTS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO DEPARTMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS



As a result of this process of collecting and analyzing data about available services, the Council identified some key implications that were associated with some of the initial findings. These findings and the related implications are summarized below.

Finding: Services for the public at large can be made accessible for individuals with disabilities.

The implication of this finding is that all educational programs and services of the Department can be made accessible to individuals with disabilities. However, this accessibility does not occur without a level of awareness, planning for the needs of the individuals with disabilities, allocation of necessary resources and the acceptance of responsibility to plan for such individuals.

Finding: When services provided by the Department are not readily accessible for individuals with disabilities, specific impediments can be identified that must be overcome.

The implication of this finding is that the Department can identify the impediments that must be eliminated to ensure availability of services and programs to individuals with disabilities.

Finding: The establishment of a coordinated Departmental approach to identifying these impediments to accessibility and the resulting heightened awareness will lead to eliminating such impediments.

The process of coordinating Department services and programs initiated by the Intra-Agency Council has already begun to have a positive effect. During the past year, the Council has discussed over 20 impediments. These discussions and subsequent activities resulted in the removal of the majority of these impediments.

Finding: The provision of technical assistance to offices within the Department is a key element in systematically eliminating impediments to accessing the Department's services by individuals with disabilities.

The implication of this finding is that the provision of technical assistance to offices within the Department is essential to eliminating the impediments to accessing programs and services by individuals with disabilities.

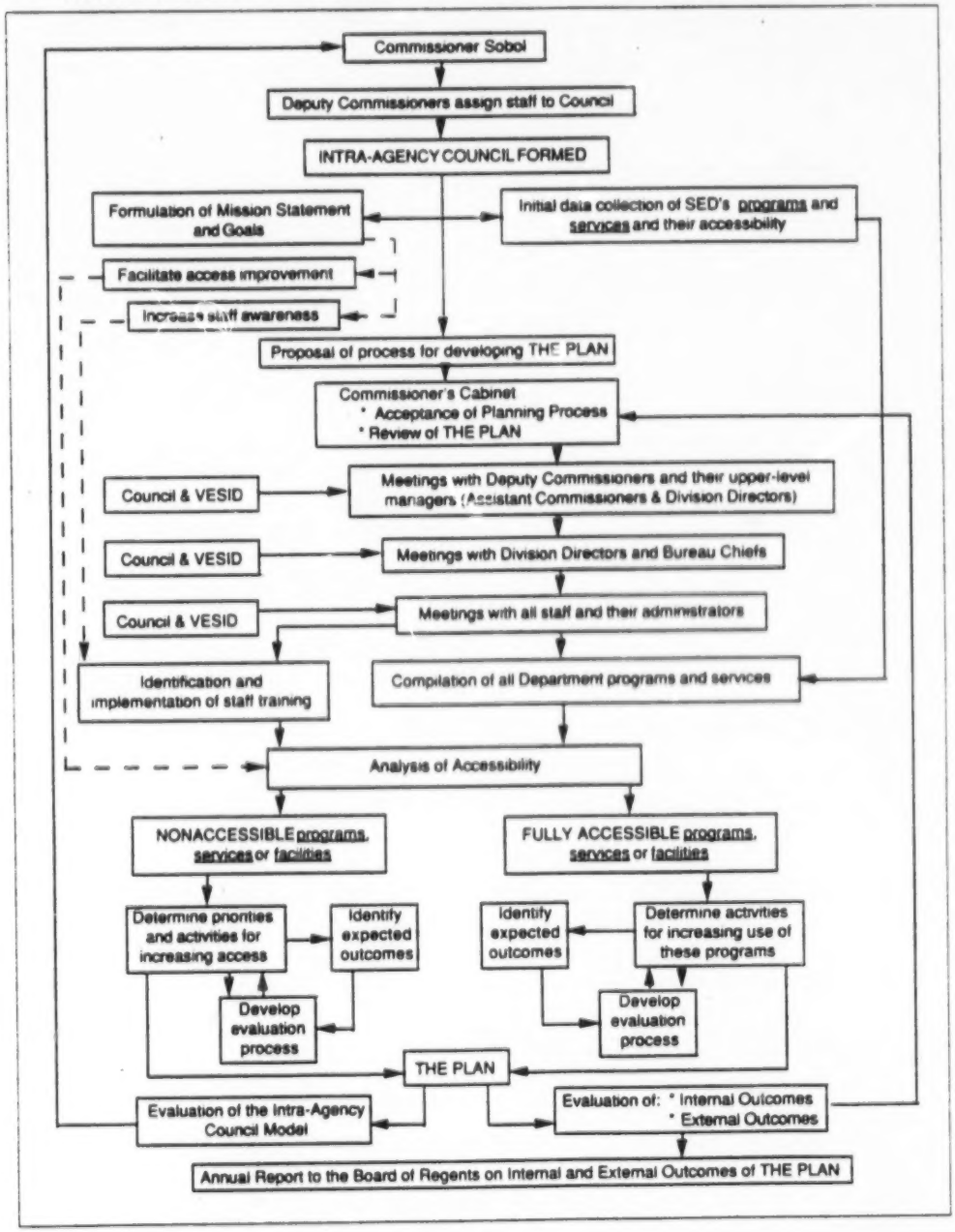
PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE DEPARTMENT PLAN

Following this initial period of intensive data collection and analysis, the Intra-Agency Council adopted a process for the development and monitoring of the Department Plan. This process, as depicted in the chart on the following page, emphasized interaction among Department staff in:

- compiling and analyzing data on the accessibility of all Department programs and services;
- identification of staff training needs within the Department;
- identifying expected outcomes for activities to increase the use of accessible programs and activities to remove impediments to accessibility;
- development of an evaluation process for monitoring the implementation of the plan; and
- development of both an internal and external process for evaluating the anticipated outcomes of the plan.

In implementing this process, meetings with all executive staff, managers of all levels, and professional staff occurred within the Department. These meetings have increased the level of awareness and understanding of the issues related to individuals with disabilities.

INTRA-AGENCY COUNCIL PROCESS FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT


Commissioner Sobol
Deputy Commissioners assign staff to Council
INTRA-AGENCY COUNCIL FORMED
Formulation of Mission Statement and Goals
Initial data collection of SED's programs and services and their accessibility
Facilitate access improvement
Increase staff awareness
Proposal of process for developing THE PLAN
Commissioner's Cabinet
* Acceptance of Planning Process
* Review of THE PLAN
Council & VESID
Meetings with Deputy Commissioners and their upper-level managers (Assistant Commissioners & Division Directors)
Council & VESID
Meetings with Division Directors and Bureau Chiefs
Council & VESID
Meetings with all staff and their administrators
Identification and implementation of staff training
Compilation of all Department programs and services
Analysis of Accessibility
NONACCESSIBLE programs, services or facilities
FULLY ACCESSIBLE programs, services or facilities
Determine priorities and activities for increasing access
Identify expected outcomes
Identify expected outcomes
Determine activities for increasing use of these programs
Develop evaluation process
Develop evaluation process
THE PLAN
Evaluation of the Intra-Agency Council Model
Evaluation of: * Internal Outcomes * External Outcomes
Annual Report to the Board of Regents on Internal and External Outcomes of THE PLAN

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Issues Identified and Resolved by the Council

While the primary purpose for the above described meetings was to provide assistance to offices during the development of this plan, it was evident that as a direct result of such meetings, the level of awareness and understanding of issues related to individuals with disabilities has significantly increased throughout the Department. The following summarizes the issues identified through these initial meetings and the recommendations of the Council to address them.

Issue: Individuals with disabilities have frequently been unable to attend Department-sponsored conferences, regional meetings, or public meetings, because the sites are not accessible and reasonable accommodations have not been provided.

Action: On April 25, 1990, Commissioner Sobol issued a memorandum to all Department staff in which he outlined a policy concerning conference accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This policy requires that all offices within the Department routinely and consistently consider the accessibility and special accommodation needs of individuals with disabilities when scheduling conferences or meetings.

Action: On June 18, 1990, Executive Deputy Commissioner Thomas E. Sheldon issued a memorandum encouraging all State Education Department employees involved in planning social activities, such as receptions or retirement dinners, to consider accessibility when reserving a specific location. By taking into consideration the accessibility of planned locations for social functions, it will be ensured that colleagues with a disability are able to participate in these activities.

Issue: The Department policies and procedures related to the purchase of specialized equipment and furniture for employees with disabilities need to be communicated to all managers to ensure that unnecessary delays in obtaining such equipment are not experienced.

Action: The Affirmative Action Plan for the State Education Department has been revised by the Intra-Agency Council to include information on the purchase of specialized furniture and equipment for employees with disabilities. In addition, this policy has been distributed to all Department managers.

Action: Training for all Department supervisors is being provided on supervising employees with disabilities. This training is being provided in cooperation with the Department of Civil Service, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), and the Affirmative Action Office through the Intra-Agency Council. The anticipated outcomes of this training include identification of disabilities, increased awareness of reasonable accommodations, needs and capabilities of the employee, and an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities employed in the Department.

Action: The Affirmative Action Plan of the Department has been revised to require that, during the development of performance tasks and standards, supervisors of employees with disabilities discuss the need for reasonable accommodations. Such accommodations may change and, therefore, should be reviewed at least annually.

Training Needs Assessment

During the previously described data collection activities, Department offices were asked to identify staff training needs on issues related to individuals with disabilities. The responses to this request indicated that every office in the Department could benefit from training for all levels of staff, including support staff, on a variety of issues related to individuals with disabilities. The training requested includes:

- Awareness/sensitivity of issues and needs of individuals with disabilities;
- Training on reasonable accommodations;

- Rights and legal issues affecting individuals with disabilities;
- Counseling and assessment for individuals with disabilities;
- Identification of learning disabilities;
- Instructional strategies for individuals with disabilities;
- Training on technical aspects of physical access; and
- Departmentwide training for supervisors of employees with disabilities.

The Intra-Agency Council will assist the Department in identifying resources to provide this training to Department staff during the next year. In response to the request for training on supervising employees with disabilities, the Council, in cooperation with the Department of Civil Service, Affirmative Action Office, and VESID is providing, to over 400 Department Supervisors, training during 1991 on working with employees with disabilities. The anticipated outcomes of this training include an increased awareness of the needs and capabilities of individuals with disabilities, improvement of skills in supervising employees with disabilities, and an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities appropriately employed within the Department.

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It has become evident that, if significant changes are to occur, the roles and responsibilities of Department management staff and professional staff concerning access for individuals with disabilities must be clearly defined and communicated. The following section describes the identified responsibilities of the Department, management, and staff related to ensuring access for individuals with disabilities to all Department programs and services.

State Education Department Responsibilities

- The Department will ensure that the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families are considered in all major policy initiatives.
- The Department will ensure that all Department-sponsored conferences, meetings, and regional forums are held at sites that are accessible for individuals with disabilities and that reasonable accommodations are provided upon request.
- The Department will ensure that training is provided to all staff on issues related to individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures which relate to individuals with disabilities within given program areas.
- The Department will initiate recruitment efforts to identify qualified individuals with disabilities for positions within the Department.
- The Department will develop a plan to ensure physical accessibility to all Department offices, including regional offices, for individuals with disabilities.
- The Department will develop, implement, and monitor emergency evacuation procedures to ensure that employees with disabilities have egress from Department offices in emergencies.

Management Staff Responsibilities

- Managers will ensure that, when major policy initiatives are being developed that have clear implications for individuals with disabilities, Department offices which provide services to such individuals will be involved.
- Managers will ensure that all professional staff under their supervision are aware of the laws, regulations, policies, and procedures which relate to individuals with disabilities within their program area.
- Managers will ensure that all appropriate reasonable accommodations are provided for employees with disabilities under their supervision.
- Managers will be knowledgeable of offices within the Department which provide services to individuals with disabilities.

- Managers will ensure that all conferences, meetings, and regional forums scheduled by staff under their supervision are held at sites that are accessible for individuals with disabilities, and that reasonable accommodations are provided upon request.
- Managers will ensure that training needs for staff on issues related to individuals with disabilities will be identified.
- Managers will ensure that Department policies and procedures related to employees with disabilities are implemented.

Staff Responsibilities

- Department staff will be aware of laws, regulations, policies, and procedures which relate to individuals with disabilities within their program area.
- Department staff will take advantage of training provided on issues related to individuals with disabilities.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE ACCESS

The following sections of the Plan describe the responsibilities of each office; the process each has undertaken to identify the impediments to access; the identified priorities of each office related to this issue; activities to remove specific impediments during the next year; and activities to increase the awareness of programs and services accessible for individuals with disabilities. The goal of increasing access for individuals with disabilities to all programs and services of the Department will be a long-term process involving identifying impediments to services and programs, removing these impediments and evaluating the outcomes of these efforts. The activities described in the following sections represent the beginning of this process.

As previously described, each office in the Department has identified programs and services that *are not readily accessible* to individuals with disabilities. In doing so, these offices identified the specific impediments to access and recommended activities to remove them. In addition, offices identified activities to increase awareness of Department programs and services that *are accessible* to individuals with disabilities. Many of the activities outlined in this document will be completed within the first year of the Plan; others will require long-term planning and the continued commitment of the Department and its staff.

Office of the President of The University and Commissioner of Education

The Commissioner of Education, who also serves as the President of The University, is appointed by the Board of Regents. The State Education Department is the administrative arm of the University, and the Commissioner of Education is the chief executive officer of the Department. Under the Commissioner's direction, the Education Department implements Regents policy and administers legislative mandates.

Staff members in the various offices which comprise the Office of the President of The University and Commissioner of Education shared information on the data collected by the representatives from this Office to the Intra-Agency Council. This data and the following priorities and activities were discussed at a series of management meetings. As a result, the following activities will be undertaken by the Office of the Commissioner during the next year with the goal of increasing accessibility to Department programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority: Department information will be made accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Office of the Board of Regents will make public documents from the meetings of the Board of Regents available in large print, braille, or on tape, upon request.
- All Department publications will include a statement which indicates that the materials, or portions thereof, will be made available, upon request, in a variety of formats.
- Information regarding Department programs for individuals with disabilities will be provided to the State Ombudsman's Office to allow the Department of State to appropriately refer constituent complaints and concerns.

- The Office of Counsel will train its staff in the use of the New York Relay System, Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), and amplification devices to ensure that individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired can communicate with that office.

Office of the Executive Deputy Commissioner

The Executive Deputy Commissioner is responsible for the administration of the State Education Department. Offices within central administration of the Department include: Office of Planning, Research and Program Accountability; Affirmative Action Office; Office of Personnel, Labor Relations and Staff Development; Center for Multinational and Comparative Education; Center for Educational and Cultural Opportunities for the Aging; and Office of Administration and Fiscal Accountability.

Staff members in the various offices which comprise the Office of the Executive Deputy Commissioner shared information on the data collected by the representatives to the Intra-Agency Council. This data and the following priorities and activities were discussed at a series of management meetings. As a result, the following activities will be undertaken by the Office of the Executive Deputy Commissioner during the next year with the goal of increasing accessibility to Department programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority: Department offices and information will be made accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Department will develop and disseminate a list of all offices that have installed Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs). Department staff who receive the majority of information calls from the public will be trained on the use of the New York Relay System for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired.
- The Education Department will develop a plan to ensure physical accessibility to all Department offices, including regional offices, for individuals with disabilities.
- The Department will, through the Affirmative Action Office, widely disseminate the Affirmative Action Plan to all employees.

Priority: All Department-sponsored regional conferences, meetings and training programs, and social events will be held at sites that are accessible to individuals with disabilities; reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request; and information resulting from these meetings will be made available in a variety of formats.

Activities:

- All training programs provided by Department staff will be held at accessible sites; reasonable accommodations will be provided and materials will be available, upon request, in a variety of formats.
- All Department conference, meeting, and social event announcements will include a statement on the accessibility of the site and the provision of reasonable accommodations.
- The Department will purchase appropriate assistive listening devices for use by offices at meetings. VESID will provide technical assistance in the purchase of specialized equipment to ensure that such equipment is appropriate.
- The Department will develop a contract with one or more Interpreter Referral Services in the State to ensure a cost effective means of providing interpreters for the deaf at Department meetings and conferences.

Priority: All plans, reports, and major policy documents developed by the Department need to reflect, when appropriate, the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- Each appropriate Department database will include specific information on individuals with disabilities. This information will have the capability of being disaggregated for the purpose of tracking and cross-referencing data on individuals with disabilities.
- The Department, through the Office for Planning, Research and Support Services, will review annual and multiyear plans to

ensure that such plans are consistent with Department policy in addressing issues pertaining to individuals with disabilities.

- The Department, through the Office for Planning, Research and Support Services, will ensure that all policy and analytical studies and special reports requiring an agencywide perspective appropriately include and address issues related to individuals with disabilities.
- All major policy documents published by the Department will be reviewed by the Office for Planning, Research and Support Services to ensure that the goals and priorities established by the Board of Regents and the Commissioner related to individuals with disabilities are included.

Priority: The Center for Multinational and Comparative Education will make its constituents and persons from other countries aware of the needs of individuals with disabilities and provide access to all such persons to Center programs and activities.

Activities:

- All programs will include outreach to individuals with disabilities through information on application forms and contact with professional organizations.
- All partner countries will receive information regarding programs for and the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Information concerning funding and international programs for persons with disabilities will be shared with VESID.
- International programs will be initiated for persons with disabilities in cooperation with VESID and the Office of Special Education Services.

Office of Cultural Education

The Office of Cultural Education (OCE) provides services to the citizens of New York through the State Museum, State Archives and Records Administration (SARA), State Library, and Public Broadcasting. The responsibilities of OCE include providing technical assistance and leadership in policy development to the wide range of cultural and informational institutions in New York State, including museums, historical societies, historic records repositories, libraries, State and local government records programs, and public broadcasting stations. Additionally, it collects and preserves artifacts and information reflecting New York State's cultural and natural heritage and serves as a link between the statewide goals of elementary, middle, secondary, continuing and higher education, and the public programs developed by cultural institutions.

Under the leadership of the Deputy Commissioner, OCE established a Subcommittee on Access with representation from all major programs. The Subcommittee organized nine "focus group" sessions in the fall of 1990 to identify major issues and to develop access plans for each program. A total of 85 staff members representing all levels of personnel participated in the focus groups. As a result of this process, the following priorities and activities of OCE will be undertaken with the goal of permanently increasing the accessibility to OCE programs and services to individuals with disabilities.

Some of the activities listed below are already underway or can be initiated immediately. Other activities depend wholly or partially on the availability of funding or staff resources. The Deputy Commissioner's office, with the assistance of the Subcommittee on Access, the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, and other Department offices, will seek the necessary funding and resources (e.g., training, technical assistance) to implement the program and OCE-wide activities which require such resources.

Priority: The Office of Cultural Education will initiate an ongoing process to ensure the orderly implementation, coordination, evaluation, and modification of plans to improve the accessibility of services and programs to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- Plans to improve access will be developed by each program and will be fully supported by the OCE Subcommittee on Access. Support will include assistance and guid-

ance in identifying areas of need, implementing activities, interprogram coordination, periodic evaluation, and, when necessary, modification of both individual and OCE-wide plans.

- The Office of Cultural Education will undertake an annual evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the Office's efforts to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with the annual evaluation of the *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services* by the Intra-Agency Council.

Priority: The Office of Cultural Education will ensure the safety of all persons, including those with disabilities, who work in or visit the Cultural Education Center and other OCE facilities.

Activities:

- In cooperation with the Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and Office of General Services, emergency procedures will be reviewed and training will be provided on an ongoing basis to ensure the safety of all persons with disabilities working in or visiting the Cultural Education Center and other OCE facilities.

Priority: The Office of Cultural Education will seek employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities within its programs.

Activities:

- The Office of Cultural Education management staff will seek to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and ensure reasonable accommodations for current and potential employees with disabilities.
- The Office of Cultural Education, in cooperation with VESID, will work with the community to increase volunteer opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of Cultural Education, with support from the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities and the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, will provide leadership to develop a Regents policy initiative to expand accessibility of libraries, museums, historical societies, and other cultural institutions in New York State for citizens with disabilities.

Activities:

- A major policy discussion will be undertaken with the Board of Regents on the accessibility of libraries, museums, historical societies, and similar cultural organizations to users with disabilities in New York State.

Priority: The Office of Cultural Education will use the public broadcasting medium more fully to expand awareness of accessibility issues for persons with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Division of Public Broadcasting will undertake a survey and disseminate information to potential users on all existing public service announcements, video programs, and related materials developed by Public Broadcasting and other offices in the Department regarding accessibility to individuals with disabilities.
- The Division of Public Broadcasting will work with the Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (LBVH) on cooperative public information projects. The purpose of these mutually beneficial projects will be to (1) use public broadcasting as a medium to increase public awareness of LBVH services; and (2) use the LBVH network to increase awareness of public broadcasting services (e.g., radio reading service).
- The Division of Public Broadcasting will write articles for both internal and external Department publications on the availability of current broadcasting services to individuals with disabilities (e.g., closed-captioning, radio reading services to the visually impaired).
- The Division of Public Broadcasting, with the assistance of VESID, will explore State, Federal and private funding sources to improve services to individuals with disabilities, including the use of State and Federal equipment funds to encourage public broadcasting stations to provide radio read-

ing services and closed-captioning. In addition, technical assistance will be provided to public broadcasting stations to secure private funding grants for such equipment.

- The Division of Public Broadcasting, with the assistance of VESID, will explore with public television stations and the Network Operations Center, the possibility of establishing a teletext service for hearing impaired individuals.

Priority: The New York State Museum will provide leadership to museums throughout the State in ensuring access to all individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- Museum staff will develop an information program to improve public awareness of the currently accessible services of the Museum available to visitors with disabilities.
- Museum staff will ensure that Museum exhibits are developed with the needs of persons with disabilities in mind. To this end, Museum staff will develop guidelines, as part of the Museum's Strategic Plan, that address accessibility issues in all exhibit development efforts.
- Museum staff, with the assistance of VESID, will identify consultants with expertise in increasing access for individuals with disabilities to museums. These consultants will work with museum staff as museum exhibits and other public programs are developed.
- Museum staff, in cooperation with VESID, will develop strategies to obtain Federal and private funding for the purpose of increasing access to the State Museum and other museums throughout the State for individuals with disabilities.
- Specific approaches will be developed to ensure that Museum visitors with disabilities have the opportunity to provide input regarding reasonable accommodation to their needs in Museum programs.
- Museum staff will continue to exchange information with other museums throughout the State and nation regarding the improvement of accessibility to services for Museum visitors with disabilities.
- Museum staff, in cooperation with VESID and community service organizations, will work to provide employment and volunteer opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In 1991, emphasis will be placed on identifying and providing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who have an interest in research or collection management.
- Museum staff will explore, with LBVH and outside experts, alternative educational formats (e.g., tactile geological maps, computers) to increase learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

Priority: The State Archives and Records Administration Office (SARA) will provide leadership in expanding access to its services to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- SARA staff, with the assistance of the LBVH, VESID and community organizations, will improve on-site access to archival materials for researchers with disabilities (e.g., specific devices, computers).
- SARA staff will continue to seek employment and volunteer opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- SARA staff will, through brochures and other information tools, increase public awareness of currently accessible services available to researchers with disabilities.
- When necessary, and possible, SARA staff will include guidelines to address accessibility issues in State and local records management programs for individuals with disabilities.
- SARA staff will introduce the Local Government Records Management Advisory Council to the issues of accessibility for people with disabilities. It will also explore with the Council the possibilities of funding incentives for local governments to improve access to records by such individuals.

Priority: The State Library will provide leadership in increasing physical and programmatic accessibility of the Research Library and all other libraries in New York State for individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- The State Library will initiate the review of guidelines incorporated in all State Library aid programs to ensure planning for accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- Input will be sought from community service organizations, advocacy groups, etc. to determine what library services, in the Research Library and all other libraries throughout the State, are currently not accessible and what services are needed to improve accessibility to individuals with disabilities.
- Public information programs in the Research Library will be developed and expanded, including talking book services to patrons with visual disabilities, to increase public awareness of services provided to individuals with disabilities.
- Guidelines for current Research Library loan and other programs will be reviewed to improve access to such services for individuals with disabilities.
- The State Library, in cooperation with VESID, will develop a proposal development guide which will assist local public libraries to leverage local foundation funds in conjunction with Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) Title II Federal Funds to improve physical accessibility to libraries. Technical assistance in identifying sources of local foundation funds will also be provided to local public libraries.

Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education

The Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education is responsible for the coordination of 3 major program areas, each headed by an Associate Commissioner, in order to administer and implement Board of Regents policy in the 725 public school districts, 41 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and the 2,200 nonpublic elementary, middle, and secondary schools of New York State. This responsibility includes providing leadership and oversight to the annual investment in elementary and secondary education in New York State made by local government, the State, and the Federal government.

Staff members in the various Assistant Commissioners' Offices which comprise the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education (OEMSE) shared a draft of the *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services* with staff members. This provided all staff with an opportunity to have input during the development of the Plan. The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will continue its efforts to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of its staff and school personnel to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The following activities will be undertaken during the next year with the goal of increasing accessibility to programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, through the Division of Occupational Education, will provide leadership to ensure the orderly implementation, coordination, and evaluation of OEMSE program plans to improve the accessibility of services and programs to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Division of Occupational Education, with the assistance of VESID, will oversee the development of individual office plans to improve access to individuals with disabilities. The plans will include assistance and guidance in identifying areas of need, implementing activities, interprogram coordination, periodic evaluation, and, when necessary, modification of both individual and officewide plans.
- The Division of Occupational Education will undertake an annual evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of OEMSE's efforts to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with the annual evaluation of the *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services* by the Intra-Agency Council.

Priority: The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will provide leadership to ensure that all public and private schools in New York State will become accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- All training provided to key decision makers in the provision of special education by staff of the Office for Special Education Services and by the Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRCs) will be held at accessible sites. Reasonable accommodations will be provided and training materials will be available, upon request, in a variety of formats.
- The Office of Special Education Services will develop and disseminate information to non-English speaking persons involved in the education of students with disabilities. Each parent publication will be available in 10 major languages.
- The Office of Special Education Services will establish a mechanism for the collection of information on students with disabilities as they transition from school-age programs to adult services. This will assist the Department and other State agencies in providing appropriate adult services for such students.
- The Office of Special Education Services will continue to participate in Department curriculum development activities by providing information on individuals with disabilities, curriculum modifications, and suggestions for adaptive technology for use by special educators to ensure that educational programs are accessible to students with disabilities.
- The Office of Planning, Assessment and Technological Services will promote the statewide replication of the Model Schools Program: Special Education Activities Using Technology during the 1990-91 school year. This will ensure that increased numbers of students with disabilities will benefit from the use of technology at home and school.
- The Office of Planning, Assessment and Technological Services will include in the proposed *Long-Range Plan for Technology in Elementary and Secondary Education in New York State* the requirement that all planning for the use of technology in schools must consider the needs of students with disabilities.
- The Office of Planning, Assessment and Technological Services will improve school district planning for technology, including technology used by students with disabilities, by expanding the Technology Planning for Improving Schools (TPIS) service statewide, using Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and Cooperative Service Application (COSER) agreements.
- The Office of Planning, Assessment and Technological Services will increase awareness statewide of the technology needs of students with disabilities by including articles in the *Technology Applications Quarterly* (TAQ) newsletter on the use of technology in special education. In addition, the mailing list will be reviewed to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive this publication.
- The Office of Educational Finance and Management Services will train all prospective and existing school bus drivers/aides and monitors who transport children with disabilities on the needs of such students. In addition, a newsletter will be published and disseminated to all school driver instructors to keep them informed and knowledgeable of recent trends in transporting students with disabilities.
- The Office of Educational Finance and Management Services will develop a letter for all schools to send to parents and students informing them of reasonable accommodations available for students with special dietary needs and the procedures for requesting such services.
- During site visits, the Division of Occupational Education will identify barriers to accessibility to Vocational Education Act (VEA) and locally funded occupational education programs for students with disabilities and provide technical assistance and staff development activities to assist such programs in removing these barriers.

- The Office of General and Occupational Education Programs, in cooperation with VESID, will provide technical assistance to local occupational education advisory councils in establishing partnerships with business and industry to increase work experience opportunities for students with disabilities.
- The Office of General and Occupational Education Programs' regional coordinator network for AIDS Education will work together with staff from the Office of Special Education Services (OSES) Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRCs) to provide regional training of local school elementary teachers and secondary health education teachers in the use of the supplement to the *AIDS Instructional Guide, K-12* for modifying instruction for students with disabilities.
- The Office of Nonpublic School Services will promote the awareness of nonpublic school administrators of the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
- The Deputy Commissioner will send a memorandum to all District Superintendents of Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) communicating the Department's policy to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- Under the direction of the Associate Commissioner for Policy, Instruction and Assessment, the Division of Occupational Education will train staff to review programs and services for accessibility and to identify and utilize resources designed to assist school districts in complying with Section 504 regulations.

Priority: The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will ensure the safety of all persons, including those with disabilities, who work at or visit regional facilities.

Activities:

- The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, through the Division of Occupational Education, and in cooperation with VESID and the Office of General Services (OGS), will review emergency procedures, and training will be provided on an ongoing basis to ensure the safety of all persons working in or visiting the regional facilities, including individuals with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will seek employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities within its programs.

Activities:

- The Deputy Commissioner's office and management staff will seek to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities when funding is available, and ensure reasonable accommodation for current and potential employees with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will provide leadership to schools in need of assistance, including Schools Under Registration Review (SURR), in ensuring access to individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, through the Division of Occupational Education, will provide technical assistance, with the support of and assistance from VESID, to school and district officials regarding issues of policy and compliance related to individuals with disabilities and communicate appropriate concerns to relevant Department office(s).
- The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will provide assistance and guidance in identifying areas of need, implementing activities, interprogram coordination and, when and where necessary, facilitate the modification of district/building activities as they relate to issues of access to individuals with disabilities.
- The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will incorporate, within the scope of technical assistance activities, in interviews with schools and districts in need of assistance any impediments which may exist regarding access to individuals with disabilities to activities funded through the office.

- The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, through the Division of Occupational Education, and with the assistance of VESID and other appropriate Department offices, will identify the types and kinds of technical assistance appropriate to removing obstacles identified in order to improve access for students with disabilities in Schools Under Registration Review.

Priority: The Office of Grants Management and Compliance will ensure that the needs of individuals and their families will be included in the monitoring of school districts and programs receiving funds under programs for which the office has monitoring responsibility.

Activities:

- The Office of Grants Management and Compliance will incorporate, within the scope of compensatory education monitoring, a process to identify any impediments which may exist in access to such programs for students with disabilities.
- The Office of Grants Management and Compliance will develop a referral procedure to inform the Office of General and Occupational Education Programs and the Office of Special Education Services when a Local Education Agency (LEA) is cited for not having access to compensatory programs for students with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of Parent Partnerships and Student Developmental Services will provide leadership to prekindergarten programs, parent education programs, and Community Schools Programs to increase physical and programmatic access for children with disabilities and their parents.

Activities:

- The Office of Parent Partnerships and Student Developmental Services will include, in materials distributed to parents, information for parents of children with disabilities regarding programs and services available for such children within their communities.
- The Division of Child Development Services will provide training to service providers of prekindergarten programs on all laws and regulations related to children with disabilities.
- The Division of Child Development Services will use various forms of outreach for parent education activities to increase the attendance of parents of children with disabilities at parent workshops and programs.
- The Division of Community Schools and Liberty Partnerships will include, in all its program guidelines and applications, an agreement to ensure that each program provides services to children with disabilities and their families.

Priority: The Division of Occupational Education will provide technical assistance and coordinate training of staff from the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education regarding access for individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- During on-site civil rights compliance review visits, the Division of Occupational Education will identify barriers to accessibility to Vocational Education Act (VEA) and locally funded occupational education programs for students with disabilities. Technical assistance and staff development activities to assist such programs in removing these barriers will be provided.
- Under the direction of the Division of Occupational Education, a management team composed of staff from other Department offices will coordinate and conduct Section 504 compliance reviews of elementary and secondary public schools to ensure that school facilities, programs, and services are accessible to students and employees with disabilities. The team will also provide technical assistance to schools not in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- The Division of Occupational Education will train and support other State Education Department staff to assist school districts to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 through workshops, consultations, and resource material development.

Priority: The Division of Bilingual Education Services will provide leadership to the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education regarding access for students with disabilities to programs serving limited English proficient students.

Activities:

- The Division of Bilingual Education Services will provide information on access for students with disabilities to programs for limited English proficient students at all technical assistance workshops and in all written materials.

Office of Higher and Continuing Education

The Office of Higher and Continuing Education is responsible for coordinating the planning and development of all postsecondary education in New York State; for monitoring the quality of education provided by the approximately 600 public, independent, and proprietary postsecondary institutions in this State, both degree-granting and nondegree-granting; and for monitoring the quality of the academic and vocational education provided for adults by 300 secondary schools, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and community-based organizations. These postsecondary institutions and adult education programs serve approximately two million students annually.

In fulfilling its mandates, the Office, under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner for Higher and Continuing Education, carries out the following activities:

- Reviews for registration proposed credit bearing programs that would lead to a degree or certificate except for programs in professional and related fields which are reviewed by the Office of the Professions;
- Conducts readiness reviews in response to requests to the Board of Regents for charters to establish new colleges;
- Monitors the quality of postsecondary programs offered by licensed trade schools and registered business schools to ensure compliance with the performance standards established in Commissioner's regulations;
- Periodically reviews the existing 17,000 registered degree programs and monitors the quality of nondegree programs;
- Administers State and Federal programs to promote equity and access in postsecondary education, ranging from adult literacy education to postdoctoral education;
- Issues certificates to approximately 43,000 teachers or administrators each year and offers the services of a Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse;
- Administers funds for 111 centers across the State providing professional development for practicing teachers, 90 local districts with mentor teacher intern programs, and 19 local districts which are experimenting with shared decision making;
- Collects and analyzes data relating to financial, enrollment, and degree trends in postsecondary education and publishes reports;
- Coordinates periodic planning for postsecondary education through a quadrennial statewide planning process involving the colleges and universities and guided by the goals of the Regents for postsecondary education.

The Regents College* provides a related activity. The mission of the Regents College is to provide a means for individuals to acquire recognition for their educational achievement. The College offers 16 degree programs at the associate and baccalaureate levels in four areas: Liberal Arts, Business, Nursing, and Technology. The College also offers proficiency examinations which measure college-level knowledge in the arts and sciences, business, nursing, and education. Academic advisors provide evaluation services for enrolled students and advising services for enrolled and prospective students. The Regents College offers three avenues of access: on-site (Albany Office and testing centers), telephone, and mail.

Staff from the Office of Higher and Continuing Education assisted in the formulation of the proposed priorities and activities. Suggestions were solicited from all offices and forwarded to the

*Regents College is a program of The University of the State of New York and not of the State Education Department.

appropriate Assistant Commissioner. They in turn compiled the recommendations and forwarded them to the Deputy's office where they were prepared for inclusion in the Plan. The following priorities and activities of the Office of Higher and Continuing Education will be undertaken during the coming year with the goal of enhancing programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of Higher and Continuing Education will provide leadership to colleges and universities in improving access for students with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Office of Higher and Continuing Education will continue to advocate and support access for individuals with disabilities to higher and continuing education programs and services.
- The Office of Higher and Continuing Education will urge institutions to include individuals with disabilities among those groups which are encouraged to participate in collegiate programs at all levels.
- Professionals with expertise in serving individuals with disabilities will be added to two-year college registration teams to act as resources for staff.
- Part 53 of the Regulations of the Commissioner will be reviewed to determine if revisions are warranted so that the needs of students with disabilities for information on college and university services and programs are met.
- The Office of Higher and Continuing Education will undertake an annual evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the Office's efforts to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with the annual evaluation of the *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services* by the Intra-Agency Council.

Priority: Adult and Continuing Education programs will be made accessible for adults with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Office of Higher and Continuing Education will continue to recommend a legislative initiative to increase the weighting of formula Employment Preparation Education (EPE) funds for individuals with disabilities.
- A handbook and videotape, "Teaching Adults with Disabilities," will be made available to teachers of adult education.
- The Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision will collect data over the next three years on the accessibility of proprietary schools to individuals with disabilities.
- All ACCESS Centers (Adult Centers for Comprehensive Education and Support Services) will be made physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities within three years. To assist Centers in this process, the Office of Continuing Education and VESID have issued a joint RFP which will provide funding to increase physical and programmatic accessibility.
- All CASSET Sites (Counseling, Assessment and Support Services for Education and Training) which provide support services to better prepare disadvantaged adults, particularly public assistance recipients, for employment and self-sufficiency, will be made physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities within three years. To assist CASSET Sites in this process, the Office of Continuing Education and the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) have developed a resource guide.
- The Division of Substance Abuse Services (DSAS) and the Office of Continuing Education, with the assistance of staff from VESID, will develop programs in DSAS facilities to provide adult basic education services for individuals with disabilities who are recovering substance abusers.

Priority: The Office of Higher and Continuing Education will increase access to the teaching profession for qualified individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- The Office of Teaching will work with testing providers to facilitate the completion of requisite assessments by individuals with visual and other impairments.
- The Office of Teaching, through its Request for Proposals (RFPs) for the development of new tests and assessments, will specifically mandate that testing meet the needs of individuals with visual and other impairments.

Priority: All grants administered through the Office of Higher and Continuing Education will ensure that, when appropriate, the needs of individuals with disabilities are considered by those programs awarded funds.

Activities:

- The Office of Higher and Continuing Education Services will conduct meetings and conferences at which information is disseminated about serving persons with disabilities and about model programs and activities which ensure access to higher education institutions for qualified persons who have disabilities.
- The Division of Postsecondary Equity and Access Programs, in all of its Requests for Proposals, will recommend that, where appropriate, the applicants take into consideration the needs of students with disabilities.
- The Division of Postsecondary Equity and Access Programs, in its technical assistance and grants administration workshops, will make every effort to accommodate people who have disabilities.
- The Bureau of Postsecondary Grants Administration will install a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) to allow direct communication with project directors and staff with hearing impairments who are operating Vocational Education Act (VEA) programs for students with hearing impairments.
- The Bureau of Higher Education Opportunity Programs will notify the 64 degree-granting institutions and 78 opportunity programs, which provide academic services and financial support for students who are academically and economically disadvantaged, of impediments to access for students with disabilities.

Priority: Regents College will increase accessibility to its services for individuals with disabilities.

Activities:

- Regents College will incorporate, within its long-range planning process, the commitment to improving access for individuals with disabilities to College services. Regents College staff will develop a plan of action to increase accessibility to the College for individuals with disabilities.
- Regents College will establish an internal focus group whose purpose is to educate Regents College staff on issues related to individuals with disabilities; gather information about services available to such individuals; and investigate possible linkages with other offices within the Department and with State agencies for the purpose of increasing access for individuals with disabilities.
- All academic advisors at the College will receive training on services and programs available for individuals with disabilities through the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities.
- Regents College will investigate the possibility of installing a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) to ensure access for individuals with hearing impairments to academic advising services of the College.

Office of the Professions

The Office of the Professions administers and regulates licensed professions within New York State. This entails ensuring the appropriateness of academic programs in professional and related fields; ensuring that licensure and requirements are clear, appropriate, fair and effective;

ensuring that credentialing processes are timely and accurate; and overseeing professionals' compliance with the laws, rules, and regulations for professional practice.

The Department Plan was developed in consultation with Executive Board secretaries as well as upper, middle, and lower management staff. Meetings included a presentation by the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) to all management staff and individual consultations with Executive Board secretaries. In addition, all test administration staff who have direct contact with the public were included in the formation of the Plan. The following priorities and activities of the Office of the Professions will be undertaken during the next year with the goal of increasing accessibility to programs and services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority: The Office of the Professions will assist individuals with ·abilities to gain access to entry into the prof· ions by making appropriate alternative testing ..odifications in professional licensing examinations.

Activities:

- The Office of the Professions will develop and distribute guidelines for the use of reasonable alternative testing modifications for individuals with disabilities during examinations administered under the aegis of the Office of the Professions.
- The Office of the Professions will develop written procedures on reasonable accommodations and alternative testing modifications for individuals with disabilities during examinations administered by the Office of the Professions. These procedures will include specific responsibilities of Office staff and candidate appeal procedures. In addition, a dissemination plan will be developed to fully inform appropriate institutions and persons of the accessibility of the Office's examinations for individuals with disabilities.
- The Office of the Professions will maintain a record of alternative testing modifications for individuals with disabilities who took professional licensing examinations. This record will be used as a reference to ensure consistent treatment of candidates with special requests. The record will be shared for information and comment with other offices within the Department which provide testing services or services to individuals with disabilities.
- The Office of the Professions will follow up on each instance wherein alternative testing modifications were made to determine acceptability/effectiveness from both the candidate's and Department's point of view. The findings will become part of the record mentioned above.
- The Office of the Professions will consult with other Department staff having expertise in alternative testing modifications when considering unusual requests for such modifications.
- The Office of the Professions will ensure that appropriate publications, such as candidate handbooks, alert interested persons to the Office's procedures for making alternative testing modifications.
- The Office of the Professions will sensitize staff to the issue of making reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who seek services from this Office.
- The Office of the Professions will undertake an annual evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the Office's efforts to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with the annual evaluation of the *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services* by the Intra-Agency Council.

Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) provides vocational and counseling services to people whose disabilities impose barriers to employment. VESID is also responsible for the overall coordination of educational, vocational,

and rehabilitation services to all persons with disabilities, regardless of age, minority status, or disability. The Office leads interagency coordination activities to ensure that services provided by the Education Department for persons with disabilities are coordinated with the work of other New York State agencies. VESID has 15 district offices throughout New York State that provide assistance to persons with disabilities. Last year VESID provided services to over 74,000 individuals with disabilities in the State. The Office is headed by a Deputy Commissioner, an Assistant Commissioner for Service Delivery, and an Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Program Development.

In developing the following priorities and activities, the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities conducted a series of meetings with management staff, district office staff, individuals representing other state agencies, representatives from rehabilitation facilities, and consumers.

Priority: VESID will be responsible for coordinating intra-agency activities that will focus on ensuring access for persons with disabilities to the wide range of services that are available through the State Education Department to all New York State residents.

Activities:

- VESID will establish linkages with all offices within the Department to increase access to Department services and programs for individuals with disabilities.
- An annual evaluation process will be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of the Office's efforts to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with the annual evaluation of the *Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services* by the Intra-Agency Council.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Higher and Continuing Education, will assist in the review of two-year and degree-granting institutions and provide appropriate technical assistance, as needed. This will enhance the availability and quality of support services for students with disabilities in postsecondary educational institutions.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Higher and Continuing Education, will provide in-service training to college personnel regarding state-of-the-art supplemental and support services for students with disabilities.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Higher and Continuing Education, will provide technical assistance to universities and colleges to develop and maintain quality supplemental services for students with disabilities.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Higher and Continuing Education, will develop and coordinate regional networks for Coordinators of Disabled Student Services at two- and four-year colleges.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Division of Academic and Program Review, will provide technical assistance and training for staff of special education teacher preparation programs. This will enhance the preparation of qualified personnel for the delivery of vocational and educational services for individuals with disabilities.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Higher and Continuing Education and the Office for Special Education Services, will review the preservice preparation of service providers in vocational rehabilitation.
- VESID, through its participation on the Intra-Agency Council, will provide technical assistance to Department offices on issues related to individuals with disabilities and will broker technical assistance for offices within the Department on issues related to increasing programmatic and physical access for individuals with disabilities.
- VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Higher and Continuing Education, will develop operating procedures for the implementation of full-service programs in adult and continuing education to include: referral and identification of adults with disabili-

ties; identification of appropriate services for such individuals; provision of educational approaches for adults with disabilities; modification of curriculum and testing as appropriate; and career planning and job referral.

- VESID will develop procedures to identify potential sources of grant and foundation funds to increase accessibility to programs and services for individuals with disabilities for offices within the State Education Department. Upon request, assistance will be provided to Department offices in developing grant proposals.
- VESID will develop a database of accessible conference and meeting sites throughout the State. This database will be made available to all Department offices and will be updated periodically to assist such offices in identifying meeting and conference sites that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Technical assistance will also be provided to Department offices in arranging reasonable accommodations requested by participants in Department conferences and meetings.
- VESID will provide training to staff in adult educational programs on identifying adults with disabilities.
- VESID will work cooperatively with the Office of General and Occupational Education Programs on improving access for students with disabilities to appropriate occupational education programs based upon the employment opportunities that will exist in the 21st century.
- VESID will establish a clearinghouse mechanism for individuals with disabilities, their families and providers. This clearinghouse will use existing Department training networks to provide: a single point of inquiry and information dissemination for adult program information; outreach and training for parents and students with disabilities on a wide range of programs and services available to such students and their families; and linkages with regionally based information systems, including job information and referral services. Information in languages other than English will also be provided. This clearinghouse will also address the needs of individuals with disabilities who are not currently students in special education.
- VESID will develop training modules for appropriate education professionals, including vocational rehabilitation and guidance counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school administrators, school board members, and college faculty and administrators, on transition to adult services and programs for individuals with disabilities. These training modules will be developed in cooperation with the Office of General and Occupational Education, Office for Special Education Services and the Department's Training Center.
- VESID will coordinate the development of a comprehensive training plan on issues related to individuals with disabilities for all Department staff.
- VESID will ensure the coordination of Department databases on individuals with disabilities by developing automated access to Department databases.
- VESID will increase the knowledge of other State agency staff who provide services to individuals with disabilities regarding the programs and services offered by the Department.

EVALUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT PLAN

The Intra-Agency Council has developed a process to annually review the Department's progress towards the goal of full accessibility for individuals with disabilities to all Department programs and services. This model, as illustrated on page 4, consists of:

- both an internal and external evaluation of anticipated outcomes;
- an evaluation of the Intra-Agency Council as a model for problem resolution within the Department;
- a review by the Executive Cabinet of the Department annually of outcomes achieved;
- the development of an annual report to the Board of Regents on the internal and external outcomes of the Plan; and

- development annually of additional priorities and activities to increase access.

In addition, the Council has recommended that an evaluation model be implemented within each Office of the Department through a "subcommittee on access." Each subcommittee within a Deputy Commissioner's Office would annually evaluate that Office's efforts to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. The subcommittee would include the following representatives:

- Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner;
- Intra-Agency Council members from that office; and
- Additional staff appointed by the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that all programs and functions of the office are represented.

Representation on the subcommittee should reflect individuals with disabilities. Upon request, staff from the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities would be available to provide technical assistance.

These subcommittees will be responsible for evaluating the implementation of this Department Plan, coordinating technical assistance and support for activities within their office, preparing semiannual summary reports to the Council, and identifying issues to be discussed by the Council. In addition, the subcommittees will assist the Intra-Agency Council in evaluating the Department Plan annually and submitting a report on progress towards full accessibility to the Commissioner and the Board of Regents.

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Office of Higher and Continuing Education *continued*

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